



From the founding of Mankato in 1852 to today, this area on the bank of the Minnesota River has served as the birthplace of industrial and commercial development in Mankato. By the turn of the last century, Mankato saw increased industrial expansion that included large manufacturing plants like foundries, flour mills, knitting mills, quarries, a bottling plant, breweries, tractor and farm equipment plants, a meat processing plant and the famous carp packing plant. Steamboat and railroad transportation allowed the convergence of manufacturing, technology and distribution, not only for Mankato but for the world. This area also served as the hub for power—electricity, gas and oil distribution—for the community; as well as a retail marketplace for the greater Mankato area. Today we celebrate the captains of industry who founded, developed and built this community.

Researched and written by the Blue Earth County Historical Society, 2009

Fast Facts

Amenities and Benefits

- ◆ Amphitheater—with portable canopy which can accommodate various performances, bands and festivals.
- ◆ Grand Lawn and Amphitheater—provide seating for more than 12,000.
- ◆ Access—to the river for recreation so boating, canoeing, kayaking and fishing along the Minnesota River will now be more accessible.
- ◆ Trail head—connecting point for the Sakatah, Red Jacket and Minnesota River trail systems which provide connectivity for more than 60 miles of continuous off-road trails from Faribault to Rapidan.
- ◆ Trail head building—includes an information center and restrooms. It resembles trail head buildings in other communities. The exterior building design is like a railroad depot.
- ◆ Playground—durable and fun play equipment for children.
- ◆ Rain Garden (aka bioswales)—an environmentally sound solution to urban stormwater runoff.
- ◆ WordWalk—poems written by citizens are imprinted in park sidewalks.
- ◆ Reclaimed Water—to conserve, park irrigation is done with reclaimed water. Mankato is a state leader in meeting wastewater quality standards.
- ◆ Kasota stone—is used for aesthetics and natural seating areas. Native to Mankato and the region, Kasota stone is used worldwide.
- ◆ *Mankato Piece*—by the late Dale Eldred—an opportunity to showcase sculpture in the park with a river overlook.
- ◆ Educational kiosks—are planned to highlight the local ecology, geology, native plants and history of the Minnesota River valley.
- ◆ Reclaimed timbers—reused lumber from former structures on park property.

About the Project

- ◆ Dates back to Riverfront Park 2000 Plan completed in the late 1980s, which called for a park to provide connection to the trails and rivers with opportunities for festivals and events.
- ◆ Fall 2004, the Mankato City Council appointed a task force to study the feasibility of building a park; they made their report and recommendations to the City Council in the spring of 2005.
- ◆ Land for Riverfront Park was purchased for \$800,000 using park funds.
- ◆ Cost of the project was \$2.2 million, funded by sales tax.
- ◆ Is a festival and events park with added amenities and other purposes.
- ◆ Items soon to be completed include two blocks of Kasota stone tiers for seating, restoration of tree line through volunteerism, control fencing around the park perimeter to be installed. Rustic trail along the river bank includes fishing spots and fire rings.
- ◆ Additional items could be completed and installed with donations or sponsorships.
- ◆ Mankato's newest park fits an important theme of the City Center Renaissance plan—reconnections.

Opportunities—Wish List

- ◆ Fixed permanent canopy for amphitheater stage and amphitheater naming rights
- ◆ Train viewing platform
- ◆ Mural to depict the downtown and river, circa 1900s, in the vicinity of the amphitheater stage
- ◆ Kasota stone tiers (to provide additional seating)
- ◆ Reuse of Hungry Hollow bridge as trail crossing over main entrance
- ◆ Public art—City center art walk of outdoor sculptures

Civic center involvement—under Verizon Wireless Center staff guidance, a number of events are probable beginning in 2010. There are several ideas, including a ticketed evening performance series. In July and August, three ticketed individual performances are likely. No-admission-cost events are also possible, such as weeknight orchestra and band performances. An art fair is in the planning stages.

The city is open to ideas and event suggestions. To convey ideas or inquire about Riverfront Park reservations, contact Verizon Wireless Center staff at 507-389-3000 or cscmm@city.mankato.mn.us.

City of Mankato 507-387-8649

www.ci.mankato.mn.us





Riverfront Park